



Fraud Newsletter

May 2008

Sheriff Steve Mansfield

Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County

*"If it's too good to be true
it normally is"*

PROTECT YOUR ID

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.

Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.

Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County

Fraud Crimes on the Increase

This last month has really been a mixed bag when it comes to fraud cases in Lewis County. We have had our normal share of ID Theft cases and Mail Scams, along with email lottery pitches. We have also seen an increase in the emails coming from people that have been contacted by alleged bank representatives wanting help in getting money out of foreign countries, for a fee. When there is a down turn in the economy there seems to be an increase in fraud cases. Often it is just people dropping their guard when they are confronted with the chance of making some quick money. The thieves know this and use it to their advantage. Most people can see the scam when they take the time to look at all the facts before they act. Don't be a victim.

Work-at-Home Scams

"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"

There is nothing new to the idea of working from your residence. Most of us would love the idea of not having to commute to work. The thought of working at a well paying job during the hours that you pick is an appealing prospect. Before you jump at one of those email ads think about the following:

- **Know who you're dealing with.** The company may not be offering to employ you directly, only to sell you training and materials and to find customers for your work.
- **Don't believe that you can make big profits easily.** Operating a home-based business is just like any other business – it requires hard work, skill, good products or services, and time to make a profit.
- **Be cautious about emails offering work-at-home opportunities.** Many unsolicited emails are fraudulent.
- **Get all the details before you pay.** A legitimate company will be happy to give you information about exactly what you will be doing and for whom.
- **Find out if there is really a market for your work.** Claims that there are customers for work such as medical billing and craft making may not be true. If the company says it has customers waiting, ask who they are and contact them to confirm. You can also ask likely customers in your area (such as doctors for medical billing services) if they actually employ people to do that work from home.
- **Get references for other people who are doing the work.** Ask them if the company kept its promises.
- **Beware of the old "envelope stuffing" scheme.** In this classic scam, instead of getting materials to send out on behalf of a company, you get instructions to place an ad like the one you saw, asking people to send you money for information about working at home. This is an illegal pyramid scheme because there is no real product or service being offered. You won't get rich, and you could be prosecuted for fraud.

"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"



The internet is a powerful tool used by both legitimate businesses and scam artists alike. Always take steps to protect yourself and your personal information as you would protect your home or car.

Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center -
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page -
<http://www.fbi.gov/maicases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

The Internet Crime Complaint Center - <http://www.ic3.gov/>

Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



Sheriff Steve Mansfield

Committed to make a difference.